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|  | **from *Confessions of a Flirt*** by Mrs. Edward Leigh  Although my early life tended to encourage my flirting propensities it did not make me the real heartless coquette, I afterwards became. The flirtations of school life were harmless, for there was no real love between myself and the parties concerned. When I left school I was just seventeen. Young, gay, rich, happy and thoughtless, without a wish ungratified. I had been accustomed to admiration all my life, and now I really deserved it. I was rather stylish in my personal appearance, so every one said. Every advantage, that money could give, had been given me, and I do not flatter myself, when I say I improved my talents. I rode well, danced well, played and sang well, conversed well, and in truth everything I attempted I did well.  Among the first satellites that moved around my sphere, were two young gentlemen, both handsome, but very unlike in personal appearance and disposition. One was dark as a Spaniard, with eyes and hair as dark as night when the moon and stars have hid their beams under a canopy of cloud. He was very handsome and talented, yet I could not love the man, for I feared him. Still it amused me to lead him on, intending to tell him every time we met, that his love was vain; but I continued putting it off.  The other--God knows I loved him, if woman is capable of loving. He was fair, very fair, with dark eyes and light hair. His mouth was beautiful, but deceit lurked in each exquisite curve of his lips. An Adonis was not more perfect in form: and he knew it. He was young in years, yet old in sin. I now sometimes think that he, like Bulwer's Zanoni, had found the true secret of perpetual youth, and that he had lived for centuries, so well was he versed in the ways of the world, and in each phase of human nature. He often boasted of the many conquests he had made, and said that no woman he chose to captivate could escape loving him. I did not like this speech; but I loved him. He had certainly many rare traits of character. His generosity was proverbial; he was a warm friend and had the most perfect control over his very high temper. It was not long before we became engaged. He said that he loved me at first sight; and God knows that his love was more than returned. He called to see me each day, and every night escorted me to some place of amusement. He was very jealous, but I liked that. He was my sun during the day, and my moon at night. There was a cloud over all my happiness when he failed to come. He was young, ardent, fiery and passionate, and I,-I was a fool! The passionate devotion of my heart was lavished upon a worthless object. I knew nothing of his former conduct or character, as he had come to Macon but recently. Knowing how particular my father was about such things, I employed a friend to visit the town he was from, and enquire into his past history. Now, friends, bear with pity my sad trial, and paint to your own imaginations how you would feel in such a case.  Within two weeks of marriage, with a man that you loved with your whole heart and soul, a perfect man, as you thought, imagine how you would feel to hear that he had (Oh God! how can I relate truth as I heard it! but I must or you will never hear with charity my flirtations,) that he had been compelled to leave the town in which he lived, on account of his base seduction of a most beautiful, but poor girl, under solemn promise of marriage. He lived as a husband with her for a few months, and then deserted her, leaving her to die alone, in ignominy, and the most abject poverty. On her death-bed she divulged her secret to her brother, who traced the seducer to the city and wounded him in a duel, and was fatally shot himself. A seducer and a double murderer, the man I thought free from guile as an angel in heaven! It was enough to drive one mad, and I am sure I was crazed for years.  He came to see me that night! How my hand trembles! I can scarcely write to describe our meeting. I was sitting alone, for I had refused to receive visitors that night, when he entered the room.  'Ah! darling,' said he, kissing me. 'Alone I see. I am very glad too, for I wanted to see you with no one near.' How handsome he looked, with his flushed cheeks, red from his ride in the wintry wind. 'What's the matter with my bird to-night? her voice is as sweet as ever, but it is too sad for me.' 'Ella do let me urge you to appoint our wedding day a week sooner, for you are so pretty and sweet, you will tempt me to'-he did not finish the sentence, but I understood his meaning but too well. It was the first time he had ever acted in such a singular manner, and I saw he was excited highly by spirituous liquors.  'Indeed sir,' I answered, 'If I have heard the truth I am not the first woman who proved too sweet and pretty for you, and in whose presence you could not control your passions.'  'Who told you that Ella?' he exclaimed, starting from his seat! 'By all that is sacred if I find out, he shall not live an hour!'  'You shall never know,' said I. 'Two murders are quite enough to doom your blackened soul, Dudley Earle!'  How pale he looked, but not with penitence, it was anger only toward the person who had divulged his secret. He remained an hour trying to persuade me to revoke my decision, and then left me a heart-broken sad woman, without an object in life. And then and there I bent my knee, before the throne of God. (I know now it was blasphemy) but I was crazy then! and vowed to revenge myself upon the whole sex, for the misery one, I then supposed the type of the species, had wrought in my soul; and faithfully I kept that vow.  The Devil aids his own, and he surely helped me. Even unsought, men would lay their love at my feet, and their foibles, rendered harmless by my own self control, became my play things. Often, very often have I acted in such a way, that I knew would inflame an even unimpressable man, and then would send his love back ungratified, to corrode his very heart. Was that just or right? No indeed, it was not. It was dangerous to me, and outrageous to others. But dear reader in pity for my anguish, and for the long years of intense mental suffering, forgive me. Never! believe me, would I divulge this passage of my life to any one, did I not think that perhaps it may be a warning to the young, of both sexes.  Let the young gentlemen always think and know, that no matter how secret an evil act may be committed, it will always come to light, and at the very time you may wish it to be kept concealed. To the girls: No matter my dears, how handsome or fascinating a gentleman may appear, never allow your affections to become fixed on any human being, until you know that being worthy. Often times the veriest serpent wears a shining coat, most beautiful to look upon, but the poison of whose fangs will corrupt a young heart and mar its peace a whole life time. |